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COMMUNISTS EXPLOIT YOUTH

April 1959

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A recent announcement states that a heavy rush of applications to attend the forthcoming 7th World Youth Festival (26 July-4 August 1959) in Vienna has been received by the Argentine preparatory committee for the Festival. Applicants are said to include Union Civica Radical Intransigente (UCRI) and Union Civica Radical del Pueblo deputies and senators, provincial committees of UCRI youth, socialist and progressive democratic youth, trade unions, Argentine university federations, local students' organizations, deans and university professors, artists and scientists.

The Festival announcements state that it will open with a "monster demonstration of the delegations in national costume, concerts of folk art, sports events, a classical ballet, Strauss waltzes and a fireworks display." Other events include art exhibitions, film and music competitions and a day "devoted to Peace and Friendship, the motto of the Festival." The program seems to offer a cheap trip to Europe, a stimulating series of events, and the opportunity for personal contact with young people from all over the world. Unfortunately, a closer look at the individuals and groups who are responsible for organizing the Festival suggest that it will be--as the six previous Festivals have been--a display of Communist propaganda rather than an opportunity for the youth of all countries to get together and exchange opinions.

The sponsors of the Festival are the International Union of Students (IUS) and the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY), two Communist front groups. In the early years after World War II, the IUS and the WFDY attracted large numbers of non-Communist members. The Communist manipulation of these organizations, demonstrated by their support of the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia, the expulsion of Yugoslav youth groups, and their intemperate attacks against non-Communist countries as "fascist" and "imperialist," has alienated non-Communist youths and students.

In 1958, the IUS included national student organizations from only four non-Communist nations. The WFDY, whose Executive Committee stated in 1951, "it is only in

the countries of peaceful construction, the Soviet Union, the People's Democracies, China, the German Democratic Republic, the People's Republic of Mongolia, that youth know another life, neither political nor economic oppression, nor unemployment or exploitation..." understandably draws the great majority of its members from state-sponsored youth groups of the Soviet orbit.

In fact, IUS and WPDY are so well known as Communist fronts that another group has been created for the purpose of organizing the Festival. The International Preparatory Committee (IPC) is nominally in charge of arrangements. It provides a necessary fiction for the two older groups which have stated repeatedly that they would never meet in a country whose youth opposed such a meeting, since all Austrian non-Communist youth and student groups have declared their opposition to the Festival.

The IPC claim to independence is very dubious: both IPC and its dummy financial firm, METROS Handels and Vertriebs, G.m.b.H., are staffed principally with ex-IUS and WPDY officials. Furthermore, the principal sources of the funds for the Festival have been acknowledged by an IPC representative to be contributions from "progressive-minded Socialist States" and an "international solidarity fund," a typical funding device to cover direct appropriations from Communist governments.

One of the members of the IPC is Permin Luis Melendez, head of the Federacion Universitaria Argentina (FUA), and chairman of the Student Committee of IPC. Melendez stated recently in the February issue of the monthly publication, Festival, that FUA was participating in the Festival "because its ideals and those of the Festival are identical--peace, friendship and peaceful co-existence among all people." Argentine youth, genuinely desiring peace and friendship with other countries, will never believe that it can be obtained under the auspices of the same Sino-Soviet Bloc which was responsible for Korea, Hungary, and most recently, Tibet.

Melendez also said that FUA decided to participate in the Festival because the report of its delegate to the preparatory meeting set up by the IPC in March 1958 in Stockholm showed that the IPC's work "is developed on the basis of equality and mutual respect among all participants." But a more believable account of the Stockholm meeting was

given by the National Union of Swiss Students which, after the meeting, withdrew from the IPC on the grounds that "the Festival is a political propaganda organization based on the Communist ideology...all efforts to transform the Festival into a neutral event were in vain."

Communist manipulation of the Festival becomes even more apparent with the recent appointment of Alexander N. Shelepin to replace General Ivan A. Serov as head of the Soviet security organization. Shelepin, before he became head of the secret police, made his political career in youth organizations. He was active in the Communist Youth League (Komsomol) for 18 years, a vice president in the WPDY and one of the leading figures in the IUS as well. He was a key figure in the arrangements of the 1955 World Youth Festival in Warsaw and the 1957 Festival in Moscow, probably in charge of security arrangements since it is unlikely that he would be placed in his new job without any experience in police and security matters.

Soviet experts assume that he has not given up his lifelong associations with youth and student groups, but is taking an active part in the organization of the coming Festival, particularly since its location in the Free World poses a difficult security problem for Moscow. The selection of large numbers of delegates to attend the Festival and their control, once outside the rigid discipline of the USSR or the satellites, will be a police job of stupendous proportions.

The Soviets have already discovered how great is the impact of Western ideas upon their people. During the 1957 Festival in Moscow thousands of non-Communist young people had the opportunity to present the Western point of view at scheduled seminars and in individual discussions. Some of the discussions took place on street corners where crowds of Russian citizens heard Western students read long sections of the UN Report on Hungary. The Russians discovered that what their rulers declared was a fascist counter-revolution was in fact a genuine democratic uprising against Soviet domination.

An Icelandic student delegate to the Festival described one such encounter thus:

"Few things were discussed more than Hungary and the Russians were often able to hear versions other than those they had read in their papers--which

stated that the inhabitants of Budapest had wept with gratitude for the intervention of the Red Army. For example, I was traveling in a railway car filled with English and Russians, and the English gave the Russians a complete account of the underlying causes of the Hungarian Revolution and its terrible conclusion. The Russians were obviously in an awkward position and did not even attempt to defend their government....For the first time they heard the beliefs of anti-Communists interpreted without distortion."

The Soviet desire to prevent the exposure of large numbers of its subjects to such stimulating contacts is undoubtedly one of the reasons for the choice of a Festival site outside the Iron Curtain.

Austrian youth is alert to the Communist attempt to use the Vienna meeting to exploit the enthusiasm and ideals of young people all over the world. On 7 March about 20,000 Austrian boys and girls belonging to non-Communist youth and student organizations took part in a "silent march" through the streets of Vienna as a protest against the Festival. Austrian students also have written letters to all rectors of Austrian universities appealing for their sympathy and understanding, and have written and distributed pamphlets and leaflets exposing the Festival as an instrument of Communist propaganda. Thinking Argentine students also will protest the attempts of Melendez and a few Communist sympathizers to commit them to the support of an obvious Communist fraud.